

## Excerpts from “Of Ghosts and Angels, A Memoir” by Doris Cheney Whitehouse

In this candidly personal memoir, Doris Cheney Whitehouse writes of a deep and lasting love. With tenderness and wit she spins a series of lively tales around an assemblage of extraordinary people who have enhanced and enriched that love. These significant others – some living, some dead – are the “ghosts and angels that hover overhead.” One by one she summons them out of the shadows and grants them permission to land. We meet them all. Her parents, Edna and Paul, her sister, Merle, Florence and Dick Kimball, her husband, Forrest, their only daughter, Paula Kimball Whitehouse and....then the two young women for whom this memoir was written, her Grand-daughters Katie and Kristen.

I have selected portions of this memoir and edited them for sake of space. What remains will include events that happened in Orleans and then at CHS that will showcase Doris’ relationship with Florence and Richard Kimball. She became their “borrowed daughter” and they developed a deep and life-long mutual love. My Editorial additions are in [brackets].

I have three copies of this book that people can borrow to read her whole inspirational story. Please contact me at [susansasso@hotmail.com](mailto:susansasso@hotmail.com) or 508-255-1732 if you want to borrow a copy for a couple of weeks. In addition, “About Us” interviews of parishioners will resume in September. SES

### Chapter 1 April 22, 1944

I had to take the subway to the South Station in Boston, then a train to Hyannis and finally a bus to Orleans. It was a long trip for a tired student nurse on a rare weekend off. But two full days on Cape Cod would be worth it, and if the weather was good, I might be able to get out on the lake [Crystal Lake] to study for my pediatrics exam.

My Decision to go to the Cape that weekend was the first in an unstructured chain of possibilities that would affect the course of my entire life and cause me to ask myself over and over again, “What if?...”

What if I’d had a Saturday night date? What if I’d chosen to stay in Boston to study? What if my sister had not been a hostess at the USO that night? [The USO Canteen was 1 block from the Orleans Bus Stop – somewhere near today’s Snows]

[During the evening, a young sailor, Forrest Whitehouse, approached Doris] “Would you like to dance?” he asked.

It was wartime and the patriotic duty of girls my age to be cordial to Servicemen far from home. Otherwise, I might have told him that dancing was the last thing in the world I wanted to do, and why didn’t he just go away and let me down in my tidal wave. But there was something else. Those dark brown eyes had never broken contact with my own and seemed to hold me magnetized “I’m covered with paint,” I said, “I’ll have to wash up.”.....[she had been helping children do finger painting]

[Doris & Forrest had that dance in 1944 and he fell in love with Doris right then; but he was scheduled to depart from South Boston a week later to an undisclosed location and asked Doris to come to the station to say goodbye .... But his train departed early and they were unable to say goodbye... they kept writing letters to each other... 36 in total over a two-year period and fell in love and went on to build a lifetime on a dream. The following excerpts will reveal Doris’ time in Orleans, Forrest and Doris’ growing love and then their relationship with the Kimballs and memories of The Church of the Holy Spirit.]

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Letter from Doris to Forrest written over several days - July 31 – August 11, 1945; Page 32

Dear Forrest,

Often, on Saturday night in Orleans, after dinner – or a movie – or whatever it happens to be, I find myself wandering in the direction of the “Little Church” where I know I will find Mr. Kimble dressing the altar for Sunday morning services...Last time, he was a little late, and as I sat there waiting, I remember thinking of you and wishing it were possible to write.

And then “St.Dick” came in (he is seventy two), and we sat there for a long time just holding hands and talking. Someday, I want you to meet him, Forrest, for he’s one of my very “special” people. The door to the little church is always open and I want you to see it first by candlelight.

Perhaps some evening when we are nice and tired from playing golf and roaming the fairways of Eastward Ho, we will wander in that direction and I will be able to tell you more about all these special sectors of my life.....

August 11 – The war news has been so encouraging the past few days that it seems the end is surely in sight. Isn’t it possible that the crocuses may bloom a little early this year in New England?—I cannot tell you where I will be at that time, especially now that I’ve put away my crystal ball. I can only say that I will be here somewhere waiting for them.

August 14, 1945 – [V-J DAY!] Page 33

Dear Forrest, I guess this is one of the times when it’s best not to say anything—except that which may be whispered silently, in thanksgiving. Just feel so very happy that I wanted to let you know.... Thinking of you, Doris.

[Finally, on January 3, 1946, Doris picked up Forrest at the Hyannis bus station. They had a candlelight dinner in Chatham and then spent a few days in Orleans at Doris' family home, "Happy Landing" on Crystal Lake. The cottage on Old Timer's Lane has been renovated but the current owners preserved the original front door that is shown in a picture in the book and the lake side cabin platform still exists.

In the next 40 pages, Doris' memoir moves forward to the 1980's through the birth of their daughter Kimball and she talks about her beloved grandchildren, Katie and Kristen.... And then she begins writing her memories of CHS and the Kimballs]

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I've been reading from my treasured copy of "The Book of Common Prayer – Dick's [Richard Kimball] personal copy, which has been mine since his death in 1950. It bears this inscription written in Dick's own hand:

PRESENTED TO MYSELF  
FROM MYSELF  
EASTER DAY,  
April 9, 1944  
Richard B. Kimball, Vicar  
The Church of the Holy Spirit,  
Orleans, Cape Cod, Mass.

Dick used it for every Sunday service, for every wedding, every funeral, every special rite and ceremony. He used it on a snowy morning late in January 1946, when I was the only parishioner to brave the blizzard for the early Communion. I had walked all the way in boots and snowsuit, because that was the day when Dick – at Forrest's request and in his stead – was to place my engagement ring on my finger.

Kristen, there is not enough space in this chapter to make the first brushstroke on my portrait of the Kimballs. But I strongly suspect that Florence and Dick are orchestrating this unexpected blitz of angels, and I don't think they're going to permit me to ignore them completely.

It was remembering your baptism that started me thinking of Dick's special book, but what led me back to that January day is still not clear. There are other more significant events I could associate with that same little book. Yet I suppose one is wise not to question the motives of angels.

I look through my files and find Forrest's letter to Dick:

Before I ever returned from the Aleutians, I had learned from Doris' letters of the deep love you share. Certainly, in a very significant way, you are her God-father.... We ask you to put our engagement ring on Doris' finger so we will know that our plans to be married have your special blessing.

And after our betrothal service, Dick responded:

I put in their places in front of the altar the two white satin pillows which you and Doris will kneel on at your wedding ceremony. Your vacant place represented you in a very real sense and you were present in our thoughts and affections.

I am determined to discover what all this has to do with naming of Kristen Kimball Rice. So I open the little red [prayer] book once again to "The Ministration of Holy Baptism." Only this time I read the italicized instructions that precede the liturgy. In the second paragraph, in very fine print, I find these words:

There shall be for every male child to be baptized, when they can be had, two Godfathers and one Godmother; for every female child, one Godfather and two Godmothers.

I think about the white satin pillows and remember the vacant place by Kristen's baptismal font. Can it be that the absence of a Godfather was only our failure to see? Is it possible that Dick was there, "in a very real sense.," pledging eternal guardianship to a baby girl who will carry his name into still another generation?

And was Florence there beside Jim's sister, Suzanne, bursting with all the "Godmotherly" stories she died too soon to tell to Kim? -- Stories about what *really* happened to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the poor little four letter word that came to Sunday School, and the truth about Santa's red nose? (All these stories I will tell, if I can find her voice.)

So now it appears that Chapter 10 will end on a far different note than it began. I am bubbling over with creative energy. It occurs to me that I am about to present my grandchildren with an extraordinary gift. Suddenly I'm a "born again" grandmother filled with evangelical zeal. I want to get up on a soap box and shout, "Grammy's of the world, unite! Get in touch with the angels that hover overhead and grant them permission to land!"

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Look Up! Look up and remember!..... How many can *you* count?

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